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THE AMERICAN WING

THE PENDLETON COLLECTION AND ITS SETTING

THE ultimate destination of cherished pieces or of entire collections of furniture is not always a matter of concern to the owner, who finds enjoyment in the sense of possession; but there is an increasing number of collectors who appreciate what it means to them to have the results of their search shown by or added to the art museum of their city. At the same time

also so increased as to be almost prohibitive. Now the collector is equally interested in oak, maple, or pine.

The collecting of furniture follows one of two lines. Either the piece under consideration has historical or personal interest, or it is an example of craftsmanship which possesses grace of form, refinement of lines, and rare qualities of mass and color. It is only such examples of exceptional craftsmanship that should be collected by art museums.



LIBRARY, COLONIAL HOUSE
RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

an interesting development has taken place in our art museums. The decorative arts have come into their own, and they rightly find a place with the fine arts in museum galleries. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was one of the first museums in America to realize the importance of the decorative arts, and to make additions to its collections of fine pieces of furniture.

It is but a generation since the collectors of English and American furniture began their search for mahogany pieces. Today a piece of artistic merit rarely comes into the market, and when it does, it soon passes into a private collection or a museum. The prices of such pieces of mahogany have

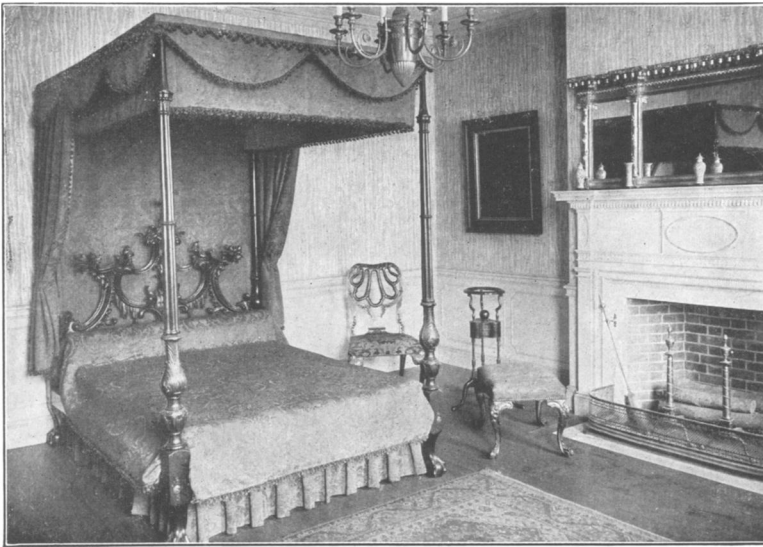
The number of collectors is legion, but there is a group of enthusiasts of the first generation who deserve special mention. Among these were Dr. Irving P. Lyon, H. Eugene Bolles, George S. Palmer, Richard A. Canfield, Marsden J. Perry, and Charles L. Pendleton. To them was given the joy of being pioneers in a fascinating pursuit, and they developed a connoisseurship which is increasingly appreciated.

It should be pointed out that at the present time the Bolles and Palmer Collections belong to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Canfield and Lyon Collections in part have found their way into various museums, while the Pendleton Col-

lection is a part of the Museum at the Rhode Island School of Design.

The possession of such specialized collections, or even scattered examples, creates a definite problem for the museum where they are shown. It is not sufficient to place individual pieces on low pedestals against the walls, but some more sympathetic setting must be devised. English and American mahogany calls for a Georgian setting—a dignified interior such as graced the home of a merchant prince in

When in 1904 the collection of Charles L. Pendleton came to the Rhode Island School of Design, this problem of a suitable setting was one calling for careful solution. Mr. Pendleton was a keen collector, with appreciation of the refinements of the cabinet-maker's art. To him Chippendale and Hepplewhite represented the apogee of English cabinet-work. He realized fully the desirability of being consistent in his collecting, and he confined his efforts largely to Dutch Chippendale.



BEDROOM, COLONIAL HOUSE
RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

the city, a ship-captain of parts in Salem or Portsmouth, or a planter in the South. The more humble but none the less interesting maple or pine looks its best in the less pretentious wooden farmhouses and homes of fisher-folks. It was a characteristic of the period that in both types of houses mentioned there was frequent use of paneling. Obviously museums may not easily acquire entire houses and add them to their galleries, but it is possible to acquire interiors or build new ones in conformity with the best standards of the older work. When this is wisely done the comfortable, homelike spirit of the Georgian period and the high quality of its furniture are properly appreciated.

When the bequest became available in 1904, Mr. S. O. Metcalf made possible an ideal setting by giving a Georgian building, especially built for the collection, and of fireproof construction. The house was designed by Stone, Carpenter and Willson of Providence, and great pains were taken with the smallest details. The result is that the visitor steps into a dignified, beautiful home of perhaps 1790, and finds the furniture placed where it belonged, in parlor, dining-room, library, front hall, or chambers. In the arrangement Oriental rugs, bronze chandeliers, Chinese garnitures for mantels and ornament over doorways, and like accessories were also used. So attractive is the result obtained that the

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visitors frequently remark, "How I should like to live here with all these beautiful things!" In the house one misses only the personal effects of the owner, or the sight of family servants in livery, to complete the illusion of a Georgian home. Delightedly the visitor wanders from room to room, noting how well mahogany goes with brown leather-backed books, or the charm of cabinets filled with English Staffordshire or Whieldon china, the china-closet with its stores of Ch'ien Lung ware or Sino-Lowestoft, the sideboard, with its silver, glass, and inlaid knife-boxes, or the beds with their brocade coverings or figured chintzes. True it is that these would appeal when arranged in any room, but the features of the eighteenth-century rooms, with their dignified mouldings, the white mantels, and everywhere the charm of proportion, all give added emphasis to the spirit of the furniture.

The visitor to the Pendleton Collection finds the walls on the main floor and hallway treated with flat neutral tints that show off the pictures and furniture to the best advantage. On the second floor the chambers are papered with reproductions of old wall-papers, thus securing a quaintness of effect that accentuates the charm of an old-time bedroom. The simple treatment of the hard-pine floors also gives a pleasing effect.

What has been done in Providence has also been tried elsewhere with notable success. In the Brooklyn Museum is a paneled room from the old Secretary House in Baltimore which is to be opened to the public in the near future, and in which the eighteenth-century interior both helps and is helped by the furniture. The more simple cottage type of interiors used as settings for furniture may be seen at the Peabody Institute in Salem, the Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia, and many other places.

It is a commonplace remark among museum officials that an ideal museum room should supply natural lighting, and should be felt by the visitor, but only secondarily to the objects shown. This is precisely the way in which eighteenth-century rooms and the furniture fitted together, whether they are looked at on this side of the ocean or the other. In the combination the Englishman and American voiced their love of home, and beautified it to the best of their ability. The degree of excellence arrived at was so great that today we realize how far we have departed from such expression of beauty in the home. It is to instill this lesson of the Georgian period that our museums bring together the eighteenth-century interiors and the furniture, a lesson we stand much in need of today. L. EARLE ROWE.